

supporter of home ownership and the strong communities that home ownership fosters, I would like to encourage all my colleagues to join with me, Congresswoman ROUKEMA, and all other original cosponsors of H. Con. Res. 7 to ensure that mortgage interest and property tax deductions remain in our tax code.

The beauty of the mortgage interest deduction is multi-faceted. Unlike the reams of forms and documentation required to qualify for many other deductions, the mortgage interest tax deduction is simple, widely understood and used by taxpayers. It benefits hard-working, middle class Americans. Forty-two percent of households that claimed the mortgage interest deduction in 1995 reported incomes below \$50,000, and many of those benefiting from the mortgage interest deduction are minorities and first time home owners.

Taxing the interest on the most significant purchase that most individuals will make in their lives sends the wrong message to potential home buyers. The mortgage interest deduction helps individuals who are willing to make a stake in their communities and take on the responsibility of home ownership. We should encourage home ownership and the commitment to our communities that home ownership represents. H. Con. Res. 7 clearly does so by assuring Americans that Congress will continue to protect the mortgage interest deduction.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE FLEXIBILITY ACT OF 1999

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce the Federal Employee Flexibility Act of 1999. This bill will extend to federal employees the same commuting benefits that have been given to private sector employees under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st century (TEA-21). This is a very important bill which could have a significant impact in helping the Washington metropolitan region and a great many others with federal employees come into attainment with Environmental Protection Agency air quality standards. For this reason, I am introducing this bill in time for Earth Day. Senators JOHN CHAFEE and DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN also recognize the potential environmental benefits of this bill, and they are reintroducing companion legislation in the Senate today.

Prior to the enactment of TEA-21, the federal tax code contained an anomaly that in practice discouraged employers from using mass transportation or other means other than driving. Previously, employers could provide tax-free up to \$65 per month (\$100 by 2002) in transit benefits in lieu of taxable salary. However, if any employee within a company elected to take the salary instead of the transit benefit, the transit passes for all the other employees would lose their tax-free status. This made employers wary of offering any transit benefits.

Likewise, employers were allowed to offer tax-free parking up to a value of \$170 per em-

ployee in lieu of some other taxable benefit, such as salary. However, if any employee chose to receive the taxable benefit rather than parking privileges, the parking of all employees of the company became taxable. The result was that employers were encouraged to grant all employees tax-free parking and employees were given no choice as to "cashing out" the benefit and commuting by other means such as walking or car pooling.

TEA-21 included language that eliminated this all-or-nothing approach for the private sector. However, federal employees were inadvertently left out of this more flexible approach. Federal compensation law must be modified to specifically authorize federal employees to have the option of receiving transit, parking, or additional salary. The bill that I introduce today provides this specific authorization.

The absence of a specific authorization has had a greater negative impact on the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area than on other cities and regions. As the federal city, Washington, D.C. has a far greater percentage of federal workers than other cities. In addition, the region has the second worst traffic congestion in the United States, behind the Los Angeles area. I believe my bill will go a long way toward relieving some of that unbearable congestion if federal employees who live in Maryland, Virginia, and outlying areas of the District are given incentives to commute into downtown Washington by means other than driving every day.

Since coming to Congress, I have worked hard to ensure that federal agencies and their accompanying jobs remain in the District. Last year, I signed a Federal Facilities Recruitment and Retention Pledge for Washington D.C. and its Inner Suburbs to "actively work to locate Washington Metro area federal facilities within 1/2 mile of a Metrorail station" and to "give preference in federal facility location decisions to sites first within the Nation's Capital . . ." This is a critical goal, and I work hard to carry out this pledge. However, we do not have much trouble getting federal agencies to remain in the District, and indeed have insufficient land for many federal facilities that would prefer to be here. Our greatest unmet challenges are the air quality and the congestion that pose immediate and dangerous threats to the quality of life, the growth, and the economy of this region. This bill is an important step toward moving us in the quest to overcome this challenge. I urge the support of Members as well to eliminate unintentional discrimination in benefits for federal employees when compared to those this body has already granted private sector employees.

TRIBUTE TO JACK POWELL ON HIS INDUCTION TO THE UPPER PE- NINSULA LABOR HALL OF FAME

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, since 1993 eleven outstanding labor leaders, individuals who have contributed to organizing, workplace fair-

ness, worker dignity, and the advancement of the labor movement in northern Michigan, have been honored with induction into the Upper Peninsula Labor Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame is housed in the Superior Dome on the campus of Northern Michigan University in Marquette.

I have the honor once again this year to participate in this important and inspiring induction ceremony, which pays tribute to the dedicated efforts of the late Jack Powell of Escanaba on behalf of the labor movement.

Jack Powell had the kind of working career that could be the outline for an adventure novel. He was wildcat oil drilling at 13. Wildcatting, Mr. Speaker, is the risky venture of drilling a well outside a known field. It's a fitting start for life that included pioneering labor efforts in northern Michigan.

After some years as a painter and wallpaper hanger in Chicago, Mr. Powell came to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the late 1930s, to find work, and he found it in the iron mines. In 1944 he was the first man to be assigned as an International Representative of the United Steelworkers of America on the Marquette Iron Range.

Jack was known as an outstanding leader and a tough negotiator, and he made clear he had joined the labor movement to improve working conditions in the mines. He was active in organizing and negotiating for all USWA locals in the Upper Peninsula, but in the history of the Northern Michigan labor movement, Jack Powell may be best known to many for providing strong leadership and keeping his workers united during the 104 days of the 1946 Iron Mining Strike.

In a long career that ran until his retirement in 1965, Jack was a member of the Michigan AFL executive board, a legislative representative for the United Steelworkers of America, and he was a good friend of August Scholle, better known as Gus, the Michigan AFL president at the time. A self-educated man, Jack was also a close friend of former NMU President Edgar Harden.

Married to Marie Bracco of Ishpeming, Jack had two stepdaughters, one step-granddaughter, and three step-great-grandchildren.

I look forward each year to the opportunity to gather with friends and associates in northern Michigan to praise these men and women, people like Jack Powell, who have dedicated themselves to doing great work as an ordinary, everyday task. I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in praising these remarkable efforts.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND DOC FRADY

HON. BOB BARR

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a great man who has set an example for all of us by the way he has lived his life. That man is Reverend Marvin "Doc" Frady, pastor of Clarkdale Baptist Church in the Seventh Congressional District, who, on April 28, 1999, celebrates his 60th birthday.